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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O R 261459Z AUG 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1018  
INFO RHMFISS/AFRICOM  
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0196  
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0301  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0312  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0211  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0155  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0151  
RUEH NJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0501  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0486  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0142  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0473  
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1283

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGUI 000190

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C  
USUN FOR DMUERS  
PARIS FOR RKANEDA  
LONDON FOR PLORD  
NAIROBI FOR AKARAS  
AFRICOM FOR JKUGEL  
INR FOR CNEARY  
DRL FOR SCRAMPTON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CT](#)  
SUBJECT: WFP FEARS FAMINE IN NORTHEAST CAR, PROBLEM MAY BE MORE WIDE  
SPREAD

REF: A - 09 BANGUI 152 AND PREVIOUS

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1.(U) SUMMARY: An August 20 assessment visit to by the World Food Program (WFP) to Birao has determined that recent civil strife in the Vakaga region of the Central African Republic (CAR) has severely affected the food and livelihood security for the entire population and all humanitarian indicators are in decline. As the situation currently stands, the 15,000 displaced people (IDPs) in and around Birao will not have food from September 2009 until the start of 2010. Due to the necessity of using costly air transport during the rainy season to move prepositioned food supplies to Birao, the WFP anticipates a \$2 million shortfall in funds. Post fears that this report may underestimate the scope of the problem. There are similar problems looming in the southwest, near the second largest city in the CAR and in the extreme southeast, due to LRA activity.  
END SUMMARY.

2.(U) The Ambassador traveled to Birao, the provincial capital of the Vakaga, on August 20, 2009 to assess humanitarian conditions, as the guest of the World Food Program. Inter-ethnic rivalry over natural resources and political control in June 2009(Ref A) left over 30 dead and forced nearly half of the population to flee the town. Fear of further violence and sporadic reprisals by the warring factions has left the region in a fragile state. The WFP believes its estimate of 15,000 displaced persons to be conservative as they and their partner organizations have not been able to travel farther than the outskirts of Birao.

3.(U) The WFP originally counted on feeding 3,000 IDPs through December 2009, but the violence of June has radically changed the situation. The fivefold increase of food dependent people means that that by September the WFP will have depleted their

stocks in Birao. Additionally, the violence of June impeded the planting of the crops, compounding the threat of famine. (The next harvest will not be until November 2010.) Compounding the disaster is the lack of ground transport to and within the region due to the rainy season. Birao is virtually an island as the laterite and dirt roads cannot support heavy ground transport from Bangui or Sudan and thus only air transport can bring in food supplies.

¶4. (U) The WFP currently has 4,000 metric tons of food in the CAR with approximately the same quantity en route. Birao requires 1,000 metric tons to meet its current needs, but current weather and road conditions require airlift until the rains relent in December/January. The WFP is currently writing a proposal for a contractor to deliver the food but do not have the two million dollars that it would cost to hire them.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: These numbers are only preliminary and the problem may be much worse and more widespread.

-- Post notes that humanitarian agencies have numbers on Birao only; they simply have no information on the Goula tribe center of Tirangulu or the Rouna area near Sikikede. Beyond the Vakaga, Post fears that the situation may be similar around Ndele.

-- Also in the north the UN has recently reported food problems in Kabo. We expect that due to the well established NGO community in the Paoua area, the situation is not as severe there.

-- Reports of malnutrition from the Berberati/Carnot area in the southwest are likewise alarming.

-- Post has previously reported on the food needs due to LRA activity in the southeast.

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We are launching a major effort to develop a comprehensive understanding of the scale of the problem. END COMMENT.  
COOK